

Reference Number: S02-217

Senate Approval Date: Tuesday, January 01, 2002

Policy on Academic Assessment

This assessment policy integrates portions of four Academic Senate documents: 1) Academic Senate Resolution RS90-78, Endorsement of Student Outcomes Assessment; 2) Academic Senate Policy S81-73, General Education Council; 3) Academic Senate Policy #S99-206, Policy to Establish the University Academic Assessment Advisory Committee; and 4) Academic Senate Policy #S99-161, Guidelines for the Fifth Cycle of Academic Program Review.

1. Policy Definition. San Francisco State University has the responsibility to assess student learning to determine the quality of its curriculum in preparing students to achieve learning outcomes; to assess the quality of the learning environment; and to assess academic support services that enhance student learning. The primary purpose of assessment is to inform and support program improvement; secondarily, the assessment process serves to meet accreditation and other external requirements. This policy is intended to delineate and differentiate the roles of specific parties to the assessment process.

2. Rationale. Academic assessment is the use of quantitative and qualitative methods and measures to evaluate the process and outcomes of student learning (Academic Senate Policy S99-206). In the 1990 Academic Senate Resolution on Endorsement of Student Outcomes Assessment (RS90-78), San Francisco State University supports academic assessment that is:

1. Campus-based, focusing on departments and programs,
2. Faculty designed,
3. Educationally effective,
4. Adopted experimentally and incrementally,
5. Multi-method and multivariate,
6. Linked to academic program review, and
7. Regarded as only one measure for assessing overall program quality.

The CSU Accountability Process outlines the following priorities for assessing quality in education:

- Identification of the expected learning outcomes for students in general education and major programs;
- Development of systems of learning assessment by which the faculty will assess students achievement of the expected outcomes; and,
- The use of assessment results in revising and improving programs.

The Process also states: The identification of student learning objectives and assessment are faculty-owned processes designed to review and improve academic programs within the faculty's overall stewardship of educational quality. Each campus shall provide evidence of progress toward the identification of learning outcomes at the general education and program levels. To that end, a report of campus academic program review that summarizes assessment results and

describes how these results have been used to improve teaching, learning, and programs will be included in the SFSU Accountability Process report.

Assessment is an activity that is conducted with and for students. Therefore, students should be active participants and be provided with information to help them understand their role and responsibilities in the various campus assessment activities.

3. Implementation and Responsibilities.

3.1 Program Assessment: Aggregate student learning should be assessed at various stages to determine whether students are developing, and ultimately have developed, the specialized knowledge, skills and understandings appropriate to their chosen area of study. Assessment of an academic program is the responsibility of the faculty in the program/department/school/college. The provost, in concert with the college deans, will ensure that appropriate assessment of student learning is occurring in all of the university's academic programs.

In implementing program assessment, each program will demonstrate in writing on a regular basis its ability to collect reasonable information regarding the achievement of student learning from appropriate constituencies and use that information for program improvement. The raw data of assessment activities will remain with the program.

Although faculty may elect to report outcomes of their individual efforts, data collected as part of program assessment will not be used in personnel actions. Moreover, while it is expected that data may be used within a program for comparison purposes, it should be recognized that the outcomes of different academic programs may not be comparable. Therefore, any comparisons using assessment data must be made with caution and without punitive intent.

3.1a. General Education: Oversight of the assessment of the General Education program is the responsibility of the General Education Council (Academic Senate Policy S81-73, General Education Council) and the Dean of Undergraduate Studies. Students' basic skills in writing, speaking, and reasoning (Segment I); their breadth of knowledge in the arts and sciences (Segment II); and their application of knowledge from various disciplines to the study of significant topics (Segment III) should be assessed on a regular basis by the GEC.

3.2 Institutional Assessment: Assessment of the institutional environment and climate, of student progress through the institution, of the quality and efficacy of academic support services, and of students' satisfaction with their university experience may be the joint responsibility of several offices, depending on what is being assessed. Such institution-wide assessment activities will be coordinated by the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment, in collaboration with other relevant offices.

3.3 Articulation of Assessment Activities with Academic Senate Committee Responsibilities

3.3a. Academic Program Review Committee: The role of assessment in academic program review is defined in SFSU Academic Senate Policy #S99-161. Specifically, the policy states:

The purpose of academic program review at San Francisco State University is to assess the University's academic degree programs in order to assure that they are of the highest possible quality. Its goals include identifying and articulating the values, competencies, and learning outcomes expected for each program, assessing the currency of learning objectives, and describing how those learning objectives have been revised in response to changing needs and new knowledge. Additionally, its purpose includes assessing how well the articulated values, competencies, and learning outcomes have been achieved and describing methods being employed to increase their achievement. (p. 1)

According to the Handbook for the Fifth Cycle of Academic Program Review, the program in its self-study will 1) evaluate the procedures in place for collecting and analyzing evidence that program goals are being achieved, including procedures that are in place for assessing student learning and 2) evaluate the results of efforts to assess and to improve student learning.

3.3b. Curriculum Review and Approval Committee: If applicable, proposals for revisions in majors, minors, and concentrations will include a description of the role of assessment activities in the development of the proposal. Proposals for new programs will include a plan for the assessment of student learning outcomes.

3.3c. University Academic Assessment Advisory Committee: The role of the University Academic Assessment Advisory Committee in university assessment endeavors is defined in Academic Senate Policy #S99-206. The charge of the University Academic Assessment Advisory Committee is to provide a channel for communication, advice, and liaison among Academic Affairs, the Academic Senate, and the faculty on academic assessment.

4. Review. This policy will be reviewed by the University Academic Assessment Advisory Committee three years after its implementation and recommendations for change made to the Academic Senate through the Academic Policies Committee.

***** APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE ACADEMIC SENATE ON MARCH 19, 2002 *****

